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ABSTRACT

The reactions of users to each of the INSPEC services are being sought as part of the normal development of these services and through a series of user studies. It was the aim of this study to assess the respective roles of individual profile selective dissemination of information (SDI), standard profile SDI, current-awareness publications and abstract journals. The study was designed to compare the relative value and use made of each service and to investigate the circumstances under which Science Abstracts, Current Papers, TOPICS and SDI are most useful. The investigation commenced with a pilot study in which six subscribers to INSPEC services were requested to participate. Each subscriber was asked either to complete a questionnaire which was sent to him, or to take part in a structured interview based on the same questionnaire. The questions investigate the use made of abstract journals, current awarness publications, standard and individual profile SDI and their comparative value. Based on the responses, the use made of the services, the value to the subscriber, and the circumstances under which each is most useful are discussed. (Related studies are: LI 004105 and 004107) (Author/SJ)

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COMPARATIVE USE AND VALUE OF INSPEC SERVICES

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INSPEC

Comparative Use and Value of INSPEC Services

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July 1972

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Summary

A survey of the comparative use made of the INSPEC services is reported. The questionnaire used and the selection of subscribers to participate in the study is described. The use made of the services, the value to the subscriber and the circumstances under which each is most useful, are then discussed.

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Introduction

The reactions of users to each of the INSPEC services are being sought as part of the normal development of these services and through a series of user studies. It was the aim of this study to assess the respective roles of individual profile SDI, standard profile SDI, current-awareness publications and abstract journals. The study was designed to compare the relative value and use made of each service and to investigate the circumstances under which Science Abstracts, Current Papers, TOPICS and SDI are most useful.

Procedure

The investigation commenced with a pilot study in which six subscribers to INSPEC services were requested to participate. Each subscriber was asked either to complete a questionnaire which was sent to him, or to take part in a structured interview based on the same questionnaire. The questions investigate the use made of abstract journals, current awareness publications, standard and individual profile SDI and their comparative value. The INSPEC services are representative of these products and serve as useful examples for comparison.

A final questionnaire (Appendix 1) was designed on the basis of the response to the pilot study. This was sent with the letter shown in Appendix 2 to a sample of 89 subscribers to INSPEC services. The sample was chosen from the subscribers to two or more of the INSPEC services, e.g. Science Abstracts and Current Papers or Science Abstracts and SDI.

It has been the general practice for both SDI and TOPICS to be sold directly to the individual scientist while Science Abstracts is most frequently sold to libraries, and this factor influenced the sample chosen. It was the intention of the investigation to gather the opinions of those who authorise the purchase of the services. It was also necessary for the purposes of comparison, that more than one service be purchased. The majority of subscribers fulfilling both these requirements are librarians and information officers. Since the subscribers to SDI are frequently individual scientists who do not subscribe to other services, consequently the final sample does not include many subscribers to SDI or TOPICS. It was considered advisable not to ask subscribers to SDI to comment upon their use of Science Abstracts or Current Papers, if not purchased, because most had taken part in previous studies.

After a period of four weeks, a reminder was sent to those subscribers who had not replied (Appendix 3).

Results

Response

Replies were received from 72 of the subscribers to whom the final questionnaire was mailed, that is an 81% response was attained. Of these, only two considered themselves unable to complete the questionnaire. Together with the forms returned from the pilot study this provided a total of 74 questionnaires suitable for analysis.

A number of the respondents were aware that the SDI or TOPICS services are received by various members of their establishments but were not always sure of the details (Appendix 4 (i)-(iii)). Other librarians were not aware that members of staff received SDI and one did not know of the existence of TOPICS (Appendix 4 (viii)). Understandably, some librarians felt unable to complete the questionnaire on behalf of the library users with whose needs they are unfamiliar (Appendix (i)-(vii)).

Some librarians suggested that the study should be extended to involve users of the services and to individual subscribers (Appendix 4 (iii), (vi) and (vii)). This lack of knowledge of the users' needs is discouraging but was not essential for this study in which the subscribers' opinions were required.

Numerical Results

Figure I

Subscriptions to INSPEC services

Question 1. To which of the following INSPEC services do you or members of your organisation subscribe?

	Number of subscribers	Percentage of total replies (total 74)
Science Abstracts		
Physics Abstracts	58	79
Electrical and Electronics Abstracts	63	85
Computer and Control Abstracts	49	66
Current Papers		
Current Papers in Physics	54	73
Current Papers in Electrical and Electronics Engineering	51	69
Current Papers in Computers and Control	43	58
SDI	21	28
Topics	7	10

Figure II

Subscriptions to INSPEC services - Types of Organisations

Question 1.

Type of organisation	Science Abstracts			Current Papers			SDI	Topics	Total
	A	B	C	A	B	C			
Academic Institution	28	28	27	24	23	22	7	1	30
Public Library	2	2	2	3	2	2	0	0	3
Research Association	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
Government Establishment	11	12	8	10	11	8	6	1	12
Industrial Organisation	16	20	11	16	14	10	8	5	28

Figure III

Method of dissemination

Question 2. Please indicate, with a tick, for each of the services received by your organisation, the method or methods of use adopted. If you receive more than one copy of any publication or service, please indicate all the methods adopted.

	Science Abstracts	Current Papers	SDI	Topics
Total number of replies	70	65	2	7
Method adopted				
(i) Current copy displayed in library	48	41	-	1
(ii) Shelved in library for browsing or searching	64	44	1	2
(iii) Circulated regularly by library to a number of groups or individuals	13	25	-	-
(iv) Circulated/distributed to groups or individuals according to content of issue	1	-	1	-
(v) Received by library and passed regularly to individual or groups for retention	4	8	5	2
(vi) Scanned by library staff for possible inclusion in an information bulletin (or equivalent) or in a catalogue or index	15	12	-	?
(vii) Received direct by individuals or groups	5	11	12	3
(viii) Distributed by an individual or group according to content of issue or item	-	2	5	1

Figure IV

Question 2. Methods of dissemination

	Percentage of the number of replies for each service			
	Science Abstracts	Current Papers	SDI	Topics
Method adopted				
(i) Current copy displayed in library	69	63	-	14
(ii) Shelved in library for browsing or searching	92	68	5	28
(iii) Circulated regularly by library to a number of groups or individuals	18	39	-	-
(iv) Circulated/distributed to groups or individuals according to content of issue	1	-	1	-
(v) Received by library and passed regularly to individuals or groups for retention	6	18	-	28
(vi) Scanned by library staff for possible inclusion in an information bulletin (or equivalent) or in a catalogue or index	21	18	-	28
(vii) Received direct by individuals or groups	7	17	57	43
(viii) Distributed by an individual or group according to content of issue or item	-	3	24	14

Figure V

Question 2. Methods of dissemination - Science Abstracts

	Academic Institution	Public Library	Research Association	Government Establishment	Industrial Organisation
Total number of replies	29	2	1	12	26
Method adopted					
(i) Current copy displayed in library	19	2	1	10	16
(ii) Shelved in library for browsing or searching	28	2	1	11	22
(iii) Circulated regularly by library to a number of groups or individuals	1	-	1	5	6
(iv) Circulated/distributed to groups or individuals according to content of issue	-	-	-	-	1
(v) Received by library and passed regularly to individuals or groups for retention	1	-	-	1	2
(vi) Scanned by library staff for possible inclusion in an information bulletin (or equivalent) or in a catalogue or index	3	1	1	4	6
(vii) Received direct by individuals or groups	2	-	-	-	3
(viii) Distributed by an individual or group according to content of issue or item	-	-	-	-	-

Figure VI

Question 2. Methods of dissemination - Current Papers

	Academic Institution	Public Library	Research Association	Government Establishment	Industrial Organisation
Total number of replies	29	2	1	12	21
Method adopted					
(i) Current copy displayed in library	19	2	1	9	10
(ii) Shelved in library for browsing or searching	24	1	1	8	10
(iii) Circulated regularly by library to a number of groups or individuals	3	-	1	8	13
(iv) Circulated/distributed to groups or individuals according to content of issue	-	-	-	-	-
(v) Received by library and passed regularly to individuals or groups for retention	1	-	-	5	2
(vi) Scanned by library staff for possible inclusion in an information bulletin (or equivalent) or in a catalogue or index	1	-	1	6	4
(vii) Received direct by individuals or groups	7	-	-	1	3
(viii) Distributed by an individual or group according to content of issue or item	1	-	-	1	-

Figure VII

Question 2. Methods of dissemination - SDI

	Academic Institution	Public Library	Research Association	Government Establishment	Industrial Organisation
Total number of replies	6			6	9
Method adopted					
(i) Current copy displayed in library				-	-
(ii) Shelved in library for browsing or searching	-			-	1
(iii) Circulated regularly by library to a number of groups or individuals	-			-	-
(iv) Circulated/distributed to groups or individuals according to content of issue	-			-	1
(v) Received by library and passed regularly to individuals or groups for retention	1			1	3
(vi) Scanned by library staff for possible inclusion in an information bulletin (or equivalent) or in a catalogue or index	-			-	-
(vii) Received direct by individuals or groups	4			5	3
(viii) Distributed by an individual or group according to content of issue or item	1			1	3

Figure VIII

Question 2. Methods of dissemination - Topics

	Academic Institution	Public Library	Research Association	Covernment Establishment	Industrial Organisation
Total number of replies	1			1	5
Method adopted					
(i) Current copy displayed in library	-			1	-
(ii) Shelved in library for browsing or searching	-			1	1
(iii) Circulated regularly by library to a number of groups or individuals	-			-	-
(iv) Circulated/distributed to groups or individuals according to content of issue	-			-	-
(v) Received by library and passed regularly to individuals or groups for retention	-			-	2
(vi) Scanned by library staff for possible inclusion in an information bulletin (or equivalent) or in a catalogue or index	-			-	2
(vii) Received direct by individuals or groups	-			1	2
(viii) Distributed by an individual or group according to content of issue or item	1			-	-

Figure IX

User needs

Question 3. Please indicate with a tick, any of the following factors which favoured your choice of the INSPEC services to which you subscribe.

	Science Abstracts	Current Papers	SDI	Topics
Number of replies to question	69	57	21	6
User needs	Number of Ticks			
(i) Required to serve a large number of people	42	30	2	1
(ii) Only a limited number of people to be served	3	6	8	1
(iii) Need for a wide subject coverage	51	31	2	1
(iv) A limited subject coverage sufficient	3	1	3	-
(v) Importance of retrospective searching	56	4	1	-
(vi) Importance of current awareness	18	50	11	3
(vii) Need for individual profiles because standard profiles are not suitable	-	-	9	2
(viii) Request for a particular service by a member of staff	2	2	10	4
(ix) No adequate alternative services available	28	11	2	1

Figure X

Question 3. User needs

	Percentage of the number of replies for each service			
	Science Abstracts	Current Papers	SDI	Topics
User needs				
(i) Required to serve a large number of people	61	53	10	17
(ii) Only a limited number of people to be served	4	11	38	17
(iii) Need for a wide subject coverage	74	54	10	17
(iv) A limited subject coverage sufficient	4	2	14	-
(v) Importance of retrospective searching	82	7	-	-
(vi) Importance of current awareness	26	88	52	50
(vii) Need for individual profiles because standard profiles are not suitable	-	-	43	33
(viii) Request for a particular service by a member of staff	3	4	48	67
(ix) No adequate alternative services available	41	19	10	17

Figure XI

Service characteristics

Questions 3 and 4. Please indicate, by a cross in Question 3, where the absence of a service characteristic diminishes the usefulness of the service to you, and by a tick characteristics favourable in the service.

	Science Abstracts		Current Papers		SDI		Topics	
Number of replies to question	67		51		18		6	
	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x
Service characteristics								
(x) Cost	6	5	11	2	2	5	1	1
(xi) Frequency	18	-	17	1	5	-	2	-
(xii) Currency or timeliness	11	3	31	3	8	-	3	-
(xiii) Degree of detail of information supplied	33	-	8	-	2	1	1	1
(xiv) Provision of cards	-	1	-	-	8	1	1	1
(xv) Classified arrangement of entries	27	2	14	-	-	-	-	1
(xvi) Provision of subject indexes	58	3	2	5	-	-	-	2
(xvii) Provision of author indexes	53	1	2	5	-	-	-	-
(xviii) Requiring minimum time/ effort to use	11	2	16	2	9	1	-	1
(xix) Others	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-

Figure XII

Questions 3 and 4. Service characteristics

Service characteristics	Percentage of the number of replies for each service							
	Science Abstracts		Current Papers		SDI		Topics	
	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x
(x) Cost	9	8	22	4	11	28	17	17
(xi) Frequency	27	-	33	2	28	-	33	-
(xii) Currency or timeliness	16	5	61	59	45	-	50	-
(xiii) Degree of detail of information supplied	49	-	16	-	11	6	17	17
(xiv) Provision of cards	-	2	-	-	45	6	17	17
(xv) Classified arrangement of entries	40	3	27	-	-	-	-	17
(xvi) Provision of subject indexes	87	5	4	10	-	-	-	33
(xvii) Provision of author indexes	79	2	4	10	-	-	-	-
(xviii) Requiring minimum time/ effort to use	16	3	31	4	50	6	-	17
(ix) Others	3	2	4	-	-	-	-	-

Question 5. Have you any further comments to make on:

(i) How you see the functions of the four INSPEC services, or

(ii) The contrasting advantages of these services?

The comments received are presented in the Appendices and are referred to from the appropriate sections of the Discussion.

Figure XIII

Numerical assessment of the value of each service

Question 6. Ignoring the costs of the services, please indicate their relative value to your organisation (in your opinion) by distributing approximately 100 points among the services to which you subscribe.

Total number of replies = 64
Total number of replies suitable for analysis =57

The values presented are the arithmetic mean of the points assigned for each individual service.

Service	Average value	Range of values
Science Abstracts		
Physics Abstracts	30.2	10 - 80
Electrical and Electronics Abstracts	35.6	5 -100
Computer and Control Abstracts	24.8	5 - 60
Current Papers		
Current Papers in Physics	13.1	0 -100
Current Papers in Electrical and Electronic Engineering	14.2	0 - 60
Current Papers on Computers and control	8.4	0 - 25
SDI	17.9	0 - 70
TOPICS	14.3	0 - 50

Figure XIV

Question 6. Ignoring the cost of the services, please indicate their relative value to your organisation (in your opinion) by distributing approximately 100 points among the services to which you subscribe.

Numerical assessment of the value of each service - Types of organisation

Type of organisation	Science Abstracts			Current Papers			SDI	Topics
	A	B	C	A	B	C		
Academic Institution	30.6	26.2	21.4	11.9	10.7	9.2	8.0	-
Government Establishment	28.8	21.4	20.6	10.4	11.8	10.6	19.5	10.0
Industrial Organisation	38.1	51.7	31.3	12.7	22.3	8.3	33.0	60.0

Figure XV

Additional information services used

Question 7. Which other secondary information services with a similar subject coverage do you subscribe to or you yourself provide within your organisation?

Number of replies = 64

Service	Services Subscribed to	Provided
Abstracts journals and indexes	56	10
Current awareness bulletin (without abstracts)	30	17
Citation indexes	19	-
Individual-profile current awareness (SDI)	11	11
Standard-profile current awareness	6	1
Batch-mode information retrieval	1	2
On-line information retrieval	2	1
Other	2	3

Discussion

This section commences with a discussion of the numerical results of Questions 1 and 2 which concern the subscriptions and method of use of the services (Figures I-VIII). Questions 3, 4 and 5 all express the users' needs and the contrasting characteristics of each service. These questions are considered together. The numerical results are shown in Figures IX-XII and the additional users' comments are listed in the Appendices. The section is completed by a discussion of the comparative numerical values allocated for each service and the attractive characteristics of other information services used by the INSPEC subscribers.

Subscriptions - Question 1

In the particular sample of INSPEC subscribers used in this study, there is little difference in the numbers of Science Abstracts and Current Papers taken. This is not representative of all subscriptions because it was intended that the survey should be comparative and only subscribers taking two or more services were invited to take part.

Of the three sections of each service A, B and C, B -Electrical and Electronic Engineering - received the most subscriptions of Science Abstracts, while of Current Papers A - Physics, has the greatest number of subscriptions. There is a tendency for some libraries to subscribe to Science Abstracts in the essential field of interest and to use Current Papers to cover peripheral subjects. Since Electrical and Electronics Abstracts is the most frequently taken abstracts journal, it follows that series A is the most popular of the Current Papers publications. The third section on Computers and Control is still not widely used.

The number of occasions on which Current Papers is taken as an alternative to an abstracts journal is small in this sample and for only two of these subscribers was the cost the reason for the choice. It must be remembered, however, that there remain many subscribers whose only INSPEC subscription is to Current Papers but who did not take part in this study because they subscribe to only one service.

It was anticipated from the nature of the sample, that the number of subscriptions to SDI and TOPICS would be small.

Subscribers

Figure II shows the ways in which the services taken vary with the type of organisation subscribing. The industrial organisations make more use of the selective services, SDI and TOPICS, than other subscribers and less use of Science Abstracts and Current Papers. The government establishments also make use of SDI - 50% of the respondents are in this group - but the majority subscribe additionally to Science Abstracts and Current Papers.

The academic library is in an environment which places emphasis on the use of Science Abstracts and Current Papers. The pattern of subscription is similar to that in a government establishment, although the use of SDI and TOPICS appears to be smaller. This can be explained, to some extent, by the nature of the available budgets. The budget of a university library is rarely used to provide the personal current-awareness services: these must be purchased by the individual or faculty (Appendix 10 (xv)-(xvi)). Such subscriptions as exist in academic institutions do not all, therefore, show in this evaluation.

This trend is also observed in some industrial organisations in which individual departments are expected to bear the cost of any information they require (Appendix 4 (ii)).

Dissemination of INSPEC Services - Question 2

In Figures III - VIII the ways in which the various services are used are displayed. The overall picture is shown by Figures III and IV.

The majority of copies of Science Abstracts are either displayed or shelved in the library and only a few are circulated before reaching the library shelves. Significant use is also made of these journals for compiling bulletins and catalogues.

More copies of Current Papers are circulated to individuals or groups, or are received directly by individuals or groups. There is also a large proportion of subscribers who shelve their copies without circulations (45%). In this sample, few copies of Current Papers are taken as an alternative to Science Abstracts and therefore both publications are placed on the library shelves.

The use made of Current Papers varies considerably between subscribers. While on the one hand many copies are merely shelved in the library, in other organisations copies are circulated, serve only a current-awareness function and are destroyed after scanning (Appendix 5 (i)).

Current Papers are used to a similar extent to Science Abstracts for selecting items for bulletins and catalogues. Only a few subscribers consider that Current Papers give insufficient detail for this purpose (Question 3 (xiii)).

For obvious reasons there are very few instances in which Science Abstracts or Current Papers are circulated according to the content of issue. Bulletins are a more popular means of selective dissemination.

As would be expected from the methods of marketing employed the majority of SDI notifications are received directly by the individual users. Only one third pass through the hands of the library. There are too few Topics subscriptions for much impression of their use to be gained but four of the seven are received by libraries.

The influence of environment on the methods of dissemination employed.

The different methods of dissemination used by different types of organisation are marked. Science Abstracts and Current Papers are circulated or used for selecting references for a bulletin more frequently in industrial and government establishments than in an academic environment (Figures V and VI). In a university or college there are too many users for circulation of journals to be possible and the scientists' interests are too varied for current awareness bulletins to be feasible. In any event the individual scientists' information needs are not served from the central budget. The best attempt that the academic library can make to provide individual members of staff with current awareness services is to place copies of Current Papers in the library with Science Abstracts.

In industrial organisations Current Papers are less frequently shelved in the library. The industrial organisations subscribe only to those services which are seen to be effective.

The majority of government establishments are able to provide individual members of staff or groups with copies of Current Papers and also to place one copy in the library.

There are too few replies on SDI and TOPICS for conclusions to be drawn. It will merely be noted that while in academic and government establishments there is a tendency for the individual user to receive these services directly, in industrial organisations, the services are received by the library and are then passed on.

Comparison of INSPEC Services (Questions 3-5)

Users needs - Question 3

Service to a large or limited number of people (i) and (ii)

It might have been anticipated that each copy of Science Abstracts would be made available for use by a large number of people and that copies of Current Papers would be acquired by individuals or groups for their personal use (Appendix 6). In Figures IX and X the values for Science Abstracts support this interpretation, but over half the copies of Current Papers were acquired to serve a large number of people, even though, Science Abstracts is also available to them. Reference to Question 2 reveals that many of these copies of Current Papers are shelved in the library.

The more specific requirements of individuals or small groups are reflected in SDI and yet, there are two subscribers using SDI for a wide service. These are both industrial organisations for which all staff may have very similar requirements.

Need for a wide or limited subject coverage (iii) and (iv)

The expected bias towards the use of Science Abstracts and Current Papers because of their wide subject coverage is definite (Appendix 7 (i)), but four subscribers require only a limited subject coverage not at present available in the abstracts journals. This concept of subset publications is one which arose previously in the study of user preference for printed indexes (Recommendation 19).

SDI is not taken particularly for its limited coverage. One subscriber in particular expects the coverage to be wide (Appendix 7 (ii)). TOPICS on the other hand are found by some to be too broad in coverage (Appendix 7 (iii)-(v)). These are university libraries whose users customarily have particularly specific interests. TOPICS are not expected to suit everyone and for individual needs SDI is the appropriate service. Only one subscriber expects a broad subject coverage from TOPICS and most probably means that the subject falls within a wide range of classes (Appendix 7 (vi)).

Importance for retrospective searching and current awareness (v)-(vi)

The theory that the abstracts journals are to be used as a tool for retrospective searching and Current Papers used as a current-awareness publication is expressed by a number of subscribers (Appendix 8 (i)-(iv)). The numbers in Figures IX and X support this interpretation but additionally point to some divergence.

Science Abstracts also has a definite current awareness function and many subscribers point out that it is of more use for this purpose than Current Papers (Appendix 8 (v)-(vi)). The currency of the two publications is thought to be similar and Science Abstracts has the advantage of being more detailed. In addition, some subscribers attempt to use Current Papers for retrospective searching.

SDI might reasonably be expected to serve both functions, but only one subscriber uses SDI for retrospective searching. It is also interesting to note that only half the subscribers to SDI consider the current awareness function of this service particularly important.

Of pertinence to these two different information needs is a comment made by three university librarians (Appendix 8 (vii)-(x)), who all suggest that in the academic environment, current awareness takes second place to retrospective searching as it is generally thought to be relatively unimportant. This is contrary to the to the usual views on the information gathering activities of academic scientists.

Need for individual profiles (vii)

The need for individual profiles is essentially met only by SDI and approximately one half of the SDI subscriptions are required for this reason. The reason for two subscribers marking TOPICS against this point is less clear, but may be explained by the necessity for subjects scattered throughout the classification scheme (Appendix 7 (vi)).

Request by a member of staff (viii)

Few members of staff have any need to request Science Abstracts, since it is generally provided by the library. Current Papers is not often asked for, but if the cost is low enough, it should be purchased by the individuals when it is thought to be of sufficient use. SDI and TOPICS are more frequently requested which indicates that for the purchase of these services the initiative is coming from the individual and not the library or information department. This is understandable where the library does not bear the cost of the individual's information services, but in many other instances indicates a lack of co-ordination in the organisation's information service.

Lack of adequate alternatives (ix)

It can be seen from this characteristic that for many subscribers Current Papers, SDI and TOPICS are dispensable particularly while Science Abstracts exists (Appendix 7 (i)). There are a considerable number of subscribers who consider Science Abstracts to be an essential service in their libraries (Appendix 9), and only two subscribers could suggest useful alternatives. Both of these cover only part of the subject field.

Service Characteristics - Question 3

Cost (x)

It is the general opinion of the subscribers that the prices are high (Appendix 10). Less than 20% of the subscribers to Current Papers consider that the price is reasonable. Consequently, the cost of purchasing duplicate copies for circulation is often prohibitive.

There are many subscribers to Current Papers who do not take Science Abstracts, but they were not involved in this study. For them, Current Papers may serve either as a cheap alternative (Appendix 10 (vii)) or as a personal alerting service.

For SDI the cost is definitely a deterrent and some respondents would not subscribe on these grounds. Similarly, where the features of the TOPICS service which the subscriber requires are also met by Current Papers, the cheaper service is taken (Appendix 10 (xviii)).

Frequency (xi)

Frequency is important to most services and is generally thought to be good for the INSPEC products. There was only one suggestion for more frequent publication of Current Papers, that is that the publication should be fortnightly for all sections (Appendix 18 (v)).

Currency (xii)

Currency is considered to be far more important for Current Papers and SDI than for Science Abstracts, sufficiently important that is, to warrant comment (Appendix 11 (i) and (ii)). Many subscribers consider the usefulness of Current Papers is greatly diminished because it is not timely, and there is insufficient difference in the currency of the two printed publications (Appendix 11 (iii) - (ix)). The comment made by one subscriber (Appendix 10 (xi)) that the original Current Papers in newsprint served the purpose at reduced cost, is an indication that currency is demanded at the expense of coverage, because the coverage of the original publication was very limited in comparison to the present one.

Where subscribers are of this opinion, further studies to determine the time between their receipt of the publication and their use, would be most interesting.

Degree of detail (xiii)

The degree of detail provided is particularly important in Science Abstracts, but less necessary for Current Papers. One user compliments INSPEC on the accuracy of the details given (Appendix 15 (i)). Another considers the information content of Current Papers to be insufficient (Appendix 12 (i)) and yet, some respondents can praise Current Contents (Appendix 20 (iv)-(vii)) which also gives only the titles of the items.

It is interesting that the degree of detail is judged to be better

for Current Papers than for SDI, when in fact, more detail of the subject matter of each item is given on the SDI cards, i.e. free-indexing terms are displayed.

Provision of cards (xiv)

The provision of cards is important to the subscribers of SDI and for one subscriber makes distribution easier (Appendix 14 (i)). The card form makes storage of selected items more versatile and one respondent suggests the sale of Science Abstracts on cards. One argument in favour of TOPICS rather than Current Papers is that while the material is similar, the card format can justify the additional cost (Appendix 10 (xix)).

In contrast, there is one user who finds the TOPICS cards inconvenient for circulating (Appendix 14 (ii)), and two subscribers to SDI find that the cards are unsatisfactory, one because the details given are insufficient and the other dislikes the layout (Appendix 19 (i)).

Classified arrangement (xv)

There is general satisfaction with the present classification and only one criticism is offered (Appendix 15 (iv)). It is interesting that the classified arrangement is shown from the figures to be less important to Current Papers than is Science Abstracts. This is difficult to reconcile with the fact that the former do not have the alternative selective mechanism offered by the indexes of Science Abstracts. Possibly the extra bulk of the individual issues of Science Abstracts contributes to this assessment, or the issues of Current Papers are small enough for the user not to be conscious of the classified arrangement. The assessment would in any case imply that the classified arrangement is used when retrospective searches are carried out in Science Abstracts.

There is one subscriber who sees the classified arrangement of both publications as the major advantage which they have over SDI and TOPICS. It allows the user to notice items which are not of immediate use but may be of interest later.

TOPICS was also marked with one cross on this factor and further investigation revealed that this subscriber had difficulty in finding a way of organising the storage of the cards (Appendix 13 (iii)). It would have been expected that one advantage of TOPICS was that it cut across classifications where necessary (Appendix 7 (vi)) and a ready-made classification or indexing system would not be imposed.

Subject indexes (xvi)

The subject indexes are important to Science Abstracts. Three subscribers do not find them satisfactory and a number of suggestions are made for improvements (Appendix 17). There is also a group of users who would like to see subject indexes in Current Papers presumably in order that they can be more easily used for retrospective searching (Appendix 18 (iii)-(iv)) as indicated in Question 3 (v) and(vi)).

The problem of storage of the TOPICS cards is displayed again here in the response of two subscribers. This may however, refer to the problem of relating the notification cards to the corresponding abstracts, which will be considered later.

Author Indexes (xvii)

Author indexes are important to Science Abstracts and would be found to be useful by a number of subscribers to Current Papers (Appendix 18).

Requiring minimum time/effort to use (xviii)

None of the services are without criticism on this characteristic. Minimum time and effort for use are most important for Current Papers and SDI. TOPICS do not appear from the figures to need to meet these requirements.

Additional points arising concerning other characteristics of INSPEC services

A few comments were made concerning gaps in the coverage of the services as a whole. These are listed in Appendix 16 (i)-(iii). The first compares the coverage of Computer and Control Abstracts with Computing Reviews and Computer Abstracts and finds it less comprehensive. It is interesting to note that this comparison was also drawn in the survey made of the user preference in printed indexes. The second subscriber notes a disregard for observatory publications and the third points to an uncomprehensive coverage of patent literature, the improvement of which was recommended in the previous report (Recommendation 1).

Science Abstracts

Appendix 15 lists a number of additional characteristics of Science Abstracts and Current Papers which are thought to be valuable. These include the indexes to conferences, reports, bibliographies etc., the accuracy of citation of information and the frequent repetition of the classification.

Suggestions were made for the improvement of the Abstracts Journals, a number of which had already been put forward in the Report on the user preference in printed indexes. Recommendation 17 is corroborated here by two requests for a report number index (Appendix 17 (i) and (ii)). Recommendation 16 is supported by a suggestion that the structured list of subject index headings should be expanded (Appendix 17 (iv)) and the request (Appendix 17 (iii)) for abstracting of reports and journals separately may be satisfactorily met by giving indication in the indexes of bibliographic form as suggested in Recommendation 6.

By far the most radical suggestion made is for a complete change in the indexing philosophy, possibly along the lines of PRECIS (Appendix 17 (iv)).

Current Papers

Suggestions for Current Papers are listed in Appendix 18. Only two have not been previously discussed. One is the suggestion that contents pages would be useful (vi) as is already provided by

Current Contents, and the other (iii) details a drastic change in the relative roles of the printed publications in which Current Papers would be issued with indexes and used for current-awareness and the abstracts would be published twice yearly.

SDI and TOPICS

The advantages which SDI offers for extending the scope of retrieval are emphasised by three users (Appendix 13 (i)-(iii)).

The suggestions in Appendix 19 express a problem which is probably faced by more users of SDI and TOPICS who find difficulty in relating the output from SDI, TOPICS or Magnetic Tapes to the abstracts in the printed journals. One of the subscribers suggests a cross-reference index of numbers to be included in Science Abstracts as a possible solution.

Yet another point which was raised in the previous report (Recommendation 22) was that users cannot always obtain copies of the items which they find in the secondary services (Appendix 16 (iv)-(vi)). Services which provide the user with a form to complete and return in order to obtain the hard copy are undoubtedly popular, but to what extent this is due to the hard copy service itself or the encouragement the user is given (by the form) to order the relevant item, is debatable. Subscribers would also find a note of the availability of items useful and think that better liaison could be achieved with National or other libraries.

Two respondents look to the time when on-line retrieval is introduced and consider the possibilities of off-line computer searching services. Their comments are shown in Appendix 16 (vii) and (viii).

Attention is also drawn to AIP's proposed 'current bibliographies' and it is suggested that INSPEC should consider similar products (Appendix 16 (ix)) a concept similar to that expressed in Recommendation 21 of the study of User Preference for Printed Indexes.

Numerical Assessment of the Relative Value of the Services

Sixty-four of the subscribers attempted some assessment for this question. Seven of the replies distributed 100 points between the three sections of one service, i.e. series A, B and C and these assessments were omitted from the calculations. A number of other subscribers were not willing or able to commit themselves on this question.

The averages of the points assigned for each service are presented in Figure XIII and in Appendices 20 and 21 the cost per value point is shown.

Science Abstracts is the essential service. Electrical and Electronics Abstracts is rated first and is followed by Physics Abstracts and Computer and Control Abstracts. Contrary to expectation from the frequency of subscriptions, SDI and TOPICS rank next above Current Papers. It would be anticipated that the points assigned for these individual services would be less than the true value because the assessment was made by information and library staff and not by the individual recipients of the services. The number of assessments made for TOPICS in particular, was small and not really sufficient for statistical analysis. For Current Papers, as in Science Abstracts,

the Electrical and Electronics section is rated more highly than the other two series.

The cost per value point is shown to be similar in both calculations (Appendices 20 and 21), i.e. for the whole sample and for those subscribers taking all three sections of both Science Abstracts and Current Papers. The latter sample was expected to give the more real comparison.

The lowest cost per value point is shown for Current Papers, which are known to be marginally priced. It has already been mentioned that the values assigned for SDI and TOPICS will be lower than the value to an individual user and this results in an artifically high cost per unit value for these services.

The cost per unit value of Physics Abstracts is considerably higher than for the other abstracts journals. This is particularly noticeable in Appendix 21 because these subscribers all receive Electrical and Electronics Abstracts and Computer and Control Abstracts at a reduced price of £120.

The varying assessments made by subscribers from different organisations are displayed in Figure XIV. The industrial organisations consider all the services to be more valuable than other organisations. Reference to Figure II shows that industrial organisations have fewer subscriptions, taking only those services which they find particularly valuable.

In the academic institutions the usual pattern of the Electrical and Electronics Engineering section ranking higher than the other series is not observed. The more theoretical nature of the majority of academic research work is reflected in the greater value given to the Physics series. In government establishments no clear trend is noted because the Physics section of the Abstracts ranks highest but for the Current Papers the Electrical and Electronics section is the more valuable.

Other secondary information services used

Question 7 was included in the questionnaire in order to gain some idea of the background in which INSPEC services are used and as a basis for comparative statements. The numerical data in Figure XV is not particularly revealing. It shows the emphasis on the use of abstracts journals, the types of current-awareness tools used and provided and the considerable use made of citation indexes.

Of greater interest are the particularly useful characteristics of other services which are listed in Appendix 22. The most important of these are the good subject indexes in each issue of International Aerospace Abstracts and Metal Abstracts, the timeliness of Current Contents and the hard copy back-up service of ASCA (OATS).

Conclusions

In this evaluation, the various INSPEC services represent the range of products currently available for information gathering activities. It is not possible to assert that the findings are true for all services of one type, e.g. abstracts journals in general, but many of the points mentioned may be applicable to other similar services

Abstracts Journals - Science Abstracts

Science Abstracts is seen by the subscribers to be the essential service which must possess a wide subject coverage and is made available for use by a large number of people. The fundamental use is for retrospective searching and consequently the subject and author indexes are the vital characteristics of the journals. The degree of detail of information supplied and the classified arrangement are also important.

It is additionally used to serve a current-awareness function by many users who consider Current Papers to be no more timely. Some difficulty is experienced in the use of the abstract journals and the cost is their least attractive attribute.

The subscribers were not able to suggest any adequate alternative, but their comments highlight a few gaps in the coverage of the services and corroborate a number of recommendations made in the report on the study of user preference in printed indexes. These include a report number index, expansion of the structured list of subject index headings, indication of the bibliographic form of items in the indexes and the production of subset publications and of bibliographies.

Current-Awareness Publications - Current Papers

Subscribers generally consider that while Science Abstracts is the appropriate tool for retrospective searching, Current Papers should provide current-awareness. Hence, currency is assessed to be the key characteristic. The receipt of Current Papers by individuals and the circulation of these journals is more common than for Science Abstracts, but cost considerations limit these activities. The subscribers require that the current-awareness publications should, like abstracts journals, embrace a wide subject coverage and be available to a lot of people. The present cost of Current Papers is too high for many libraries to buy sufficient copies for circulation or for distribution to individual members of staff. In consequence, the library frequently attempts to make a single issue available to all by placing it on the library shelves. For the subscribers in this survey, Current Papers are used in the library in addition to Science Abstracts, and in many instances no alternative current-awareness bulletin is provided. In this capacity, the usefulness of Current Papers is limited.

Subscribers who consider the currency to be similar to that of Science Abstracts lack confidence in the less detailed publication. When Current Papers is in the library it will be used for retrospective searching as was inferred by the requests made for subject

indexes. This lack of indexes diminishes the usefulness of Current Papers for a number of subscribers in the sample surveyed here, but the effect would be more acute for those who take Current Papers as a cheap alternative to Science Abstracts and of necessity use them for both current-awareness and retrospective searching.

The classified arrangement of entries is important to Current Papers but not to the same extent as in Science Abstracts.

Standard and Individual Profile SDI - SDI and TOPICS

The fact that SDI requires a minimum of effort on the part of the user, is the most important factor in its favour and this is closely followed by the currency and card format. From other answers received, however, it would not seem that the current-awareness function is essential. The high cost is the most pressing point against the purchase of the service.

Both SDI and TOPICS are, in the main, received directly by individual users or groups. There is a tendency for librarians to be unaware of the use of these services in their establishments, of their potential value, how they are best used and how they fit into the range of INSPEC services. There appears to be unsatisfactory co-ordination between the individual scientist's own information-gathering activities and the services provided by the library.

Users find difficulty in relating items retrieved by SDI and TOPICS to the corresponding entries in the abstracts journals and suggest an index in Science Abstracts to cross-reference the appropriate numbers.

The difficulties in subsequently obtaining copies of useful items are stressed.

TOPICS is more frequently taken by libraries than is SDI. A number of respondents consider that it is too similar to Current Papers to be worth the additional expense.

From the assessments received, it can be seen that SDI is valuable to those who use it. The same is not true for TOPICS, but it must be remembered that in this survey there were too few respondents taking these services for any definite inferrence to be drawn.

Type of Organisation

Academic Institutions

It is the tendency in an academic library to provide a passive service in which the material is made available but not offered directly to potential users. For instance, it is in this environment that the use of Current Papers as a library tool is prominent. This situation is enforced by the fact that the number of potential users is too large for circulation of journals to be feasible and because the central library rarely spends its budget on the information requirements of individual scientists. Current-awareness publications should be cheap enough for the scientists or faculty to purchase themselves. There is also, as an additional unfortunate influence, the opinion held by some librarians that scientists in an

academic environment are not interested in current-awareness, although this is not a commonly held point of view.

Government Establishments

The government establishments subscribe to the majority of services available, including SDI. They make more attempt to circulate secondary publications and to provide current-awareness. This may be because more money is available or because they are more 'information conscious'.

Industrial Organisations

Industrial organisations are the most selective when subscribing to information services. They subscribe to fewer services which are each consequently of greater value for them. They subscribe to more SDI than academic libraries and many of these are received by the library.

inspec

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Comparative Use of INSPEC Services

As part of our OSTI-supported research programme we are investigating the uses of the various INSPEC services. We would be grateful if you would help us in this study by completing this form with reference, where possible, to your whole organisation not only to the library. Please make any additional comments if you wish to do so.

1. To which of the following INSPEC services do you or members of your organisation subscribe?
(Please tick the relevant boxes)

Science Abstracts

- Physics Abstracts ☐
- Electrical and Electronics Abstracts ☐
- Computer and Control Abstracts ☐

Current Papers

- Current Papers in Physics ☐
- Current Papers in Electrical and Electronics Engineering ☐
- Current Papers on Computers and Control ☐

SDI ☐

Topics ☐

2. Please indicate, with a tick, for each of the services received by your organisation, the method or methods of use adopted. If you receive more than one copy of any publication or service, please indicate all the methods adopted.

	Science Abstracts	Current Papers	SDI	Topics
(i) Current copy displayed in library				
(ii) Shelved in library for browsing or searching				
(iii) Circulated regularly by library to a number of groups or individuals				
(iv) Circulated/distributed to groups or individuals according to content of issue				
(v) Received by library and passed regularly to individuals or groups for retention				
(vi) Scanned by library staff for possible inclusion in an information bulletin (or equivalent) or in a catalogue or index				
(vii) Received direct by individuals or groups				
(viii) Distributed by an individual or group according to content of issue or item				

3. Please indicate, with a tick, any of the following factors which favoured your choice of the INSPEC services to which you subscribe.

	Science Abstracts	Current Paper...	SDI	Topics
User needs				
(i) Required to serve a large number of people				
(ii) Only a limited number of people to be served				
(iii) Need for a wide subject coverage				
(iv) A limited subject coverage sufficient				
(v) Importance of retrospective searching				
(vi) Importance of current awareness				
(vii) Need for individual profiles because standard profiles are not suitable				
(viii) Request for a particular service by a member of staff				
(ix) No adequate alternative services available				
Service characteristics				
(x) Low cost				
(xi) Frequency				
(xii) Currency or timeliness				
(xiii) Degree of detail of information supplied				
(xiv) Provision of cards				
(xv) Classified arrangement of entries				
(xvi) Provision of subject indexes				
(xvii) Provision of author indexes				
(xviii) Requiring minimum time/effort to use				
(xix) Others, please state				

4. Please indicate, by a cross in Question 3, where the absence of a service characteristic diminishes the usefulness of the service to you.

5. Have you any further comments to make on (i) how you see the functions of the four INSPEC services or (ii) the contrasting advantages of these services?

6. Ignoring the costs of the services, please indicate their relative value to your organisation (in your opinion) by distributing approximately 100 points among the services to which you subscribe.

Science Abstracts

- Physics Abstracts ☐
- Electrical and Electronics Abstracts ☐
- Computer and Control Abstracts ☐

Current Papers

- Current Papers in Physics ☐
- Current Papers in Electrical and Electronics Engineering ☐
- Current Papers on Computers and Control ☐

SDI ☐

Topics ☐

7. Which other secondary information services with a similar subject coverage do you subscribe to or yourself provide within your organisation? (Please indicate with a tick).

	subscribed to	provided
Abstracts journals and indexes		
Current awareness bulletin (without abstracts)		
Citation indexes		
Individual-profile current awareness (SDI)		
Standard-profile current awareness		
Batch-mode information retrieval		
On-line information retrieval		
Other, please state		

8. If any of the services in Question 7 have characteristics which are particularly attractive, please give details of the services and the attractive characteristics.

9. Have you any additional comments?

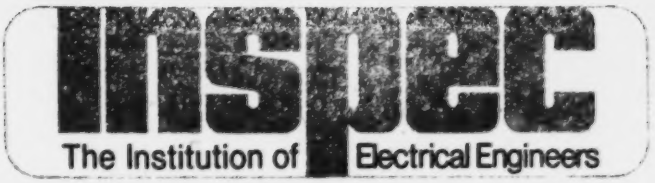
Date ..... Signed .....

We are most grateful for your help.

Please return this form to:

INSPEC
Free Post
London WC2R OBL

No postage stamp is required.



Savoy Place London WC2R 0BL Tel: 01-240 1871 - Telex 261176
Grams: Voltampere London Telex - Cables: Voltampere London WC2

Letter inviting the participation of subscribers

We are carrying out a series of studies of the use made of INSPEC services, and of the additional information needs of the users. We would appreciate your assistance in this study in which we are investigating the various uses of our services.

We would be most grateful if you would complete the questionnaire enclosed, in respect to the use of the services both in your library and by scientific staff within your organisation.

Yours sincerely,

A M Hall (Miss)
Information Research Officer

Enc

INSPEC Information Services in Physics, Electrotechnology, Computers and Control, comprise *Physics Abstracts* • *Electrical & Electronics Abstracts* • *Computers & Control Abstracts* • *Current Papers in Physics* • *Current Papers in Electrical & Electronics Engineering* • *Current Papers on Computers & Control* • SDI services • Magnetic tape data bases • Cumulative index sets

INSPEC
The Institution of Electrical Engineers
Savoy Place London WC2R 0BL Tel: 01-240 1871 – Telex 261176
Grams: Voltampere London Telex – Cables: Voltampere London WC2

Reminder to participants

We recently sought your help in a survey of the use made of INSPEC services, and of the additional information needs of the users.

We hope that you will not mind us jogging your memory in this way since your reply is important to the investigation on which we are engaged.

In case the previous questionnaire has gone astray we enclose a second copy which we hope you can find time to complete and return.

Yours sincerely,

A M Hall (Miss)
Information Research Officer

Enc.

INSPEC Information Services in Physics, Electrotechnology, Computers and Control, comprise *Physics Abstracts* • *Electrical & Electronics Abstracts* • *Computers & Control Abstracts* • *Current Papers in Physics* • *Current Papers in Electrical & Electronics Engineering* • *Current Papers on Computers & Control* • SDI services • Magnetic tape data bases • Cumulative index sets

Librarians' awareness of independent subscriptions

(i) A number of members of the establishment receive SDI directly. It is not possible to answer on their behalf.

(ii) Due to reorganisation of this company, new subscriptions will be taken by the divisions in the new year. At present I have no knowledge of what these may be. A number of members of the IEE have their own private subscriptions, of what these may be I also do not know.

(iii) There may be individuals or groups in the University using your services in addition to ourselves but presumably you will know this and have written to them direct.

(iv) I have circulated the document to the library representatives in our Physics and Engineering Departments and to the head of our Computer Laboratory. The markings are thus a composite of such information as I have been able to extract from them together with my own knowledge. I feel that many of the questions can only be satisfactorily answered by each individual researcher commenting on his own behalf. Composite answers can be rather meaningless. Furthermore, since INSPEC has not dealt through libraries in its computerised services, it is difficult for libraries to comment on them.

(v) It is difficult to complete this questionnaire for an organisation with 25 Science and Engineering Departments and 8 department libraries in Science and Engineering. Their use of your services varies greatly according to their subject interests and my knowledge of their use is limited.

(vi) I can really only answer those questions relating to library provision of INSPEC services here, and cannot speak for the users and their needs as I am not sufficiently familiar with their individual information gathering habits. What I suggest is that you circulate the INSPEC questionnaire to all members of the IEE if you have not already done so, and to all relevant scientists in University departments.

Appendix 4 (continued)

(vii) I am afraid that there are far too many scientific and technical staff for me to be able to make any meaningful consultations. Many of our staff are members of your Institution, perhaps you could approach these direct.

(viii) Topics - Have not heard of this service.

Appendix 5

Method of dissemination

(i) We are spending £550 alone per annum on Current Papers in 'Electrical' and in 'Physics' and in most cases the members of staff throw them away after scanning.

Appendix 6

Services for a large or limited number of people

(i) Science Abstracts for use in the library. Current Papers for use by small groups.

(ii) For personal use Current Papers in Physics is extremely useful but must be supplemented.

(iii) Current Papers should give a faster service, for current awareness, and a cheaper service which can be afforded by individual workers and research groups.

Need for a wide or limited subject coverage

(i) I should like to see each academic scientist provided with his own SDI service. The necessary funds are not yet available however, and meanwhile the wide subject coverage of the present abstracting services provides the best value for money

(ii) SDI is valuable but very expensive for those with a wide range of interests.

(iii) Topics. We do not have a sufficiently large number of scientsts working in the same field. Topics covers too wide a subject field to be of relevance to individual scientists who are not prepared to examine all the referencessent to them. SDI particularly useful for combinations of subjects.

(iv) We tried a subscription to Topics category 40 on electronic reliability, but unfortunately the coverage was far too wide.

(v) The only doubt is TOPICS, which is of no use unless one of the subject groups fortuitously coincided with the interests of a research group here in the University and this has not happened yet.

(vi) Topics for those interested in subjects which are scattered throughout the published services.

Appendix 8

Importance to retrospective searching and current awareness

(i) Science Abstracts is the basic service for permanent and retrospective searching. Current Papers should give a faster service for current awareness.

(ii) Current Papers in Physics to be relied on for current awareness.

(iii) Science Abstracts is used for retrospective searching and complements the 'faster' attributes of other services.

(iv) Science Abstracts: Invaluable for information retrieval and searching.
Current Papers: Current awareness.

(v) Unless there is a significant speed difference we would prefer to use Science Abstracts for current awareness too.

(vi) The value of subscribing to both Science Abstracts and the Current Papers series is questionable (as far as this organisation needs are concerned) - the Current Papers series is little used. Perhaps if the Current Papers entries were more up to date it would be.

(vii) In academic institutions where research is more leisurely than in industrial and government establishments retrospective searching seems to be more important than current awareness.

(viii) University research has a different time scale to research in industry. Current awareness is usually of subordinate interest to an ability to conduct retrospective searches in order to scan existing work before setting research tasks for students. Reference their own research; they tend to have heavy lecturing commitments and save up their literature searching for the summer vacation. Post-graduate students require retrospective searches before embarking on a research project.

(ix) In practice, our university scientists and technologists do not attach much importance to the currently available information services (SDI of RET). Those few who have subscribed usually consider the services both necessary and useful.

(x) The general attitude among our scientists is that 'all important journals in the subject field are read or scanned regularly'. They do not wish to be alerted to articles of which they are already aware, or which are not easily accessible.

Appendix 9

Science Abstracts: An essential service

(i) Science Abstracts is an essential service we will continue to purchase but possibly reduced in numbers to 1 copy per establishment and then one per series of establishments. Science Abstracts is the cornerstone.

(ii) We have taken Science Abstracts since 1903 as it is essential in a large University Library.

(iii) As a large academic library we automatically subscribe to the principal services in the subject fields we cover.

(iv) We take about 20 different abstracting journals all of which are important to us. We have subscribed to Science Abstracts since 1875, when this was virtually all that was available.

(v) To the librarian 'Science Abstracts' is a 'must'.

(vi) Science Abstracts will remain the most important service for the next few years.

(vii) Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts do not cover the other physical subjects for which Physics Abstracts are necessary.

Appendix 10

Cost of INSPEC Services

General

(i) Too expensive

(ii) Prices of services must be kept down to avoid the danger of cancellations.

(iii) The cost of INSPEC publications has risen enormously in the last few years. While the number of entries has increased this does not automatically mean that the proportion or number of entries useful to any one user or subscriber has necessarily increased. We do not find any more useful entries in Science Abstracts 'B' than we did before - only that copies are bulkier.

On a limited budget, when prices rise, something has to go, and this has already reduced our INSPEC titles taken twice.

Science Abstracts

(iv) The necessary funds for SDI are not yet available and meanwhile the wide subject coverage of the present abstracting services provides the best value for money.

(v) This library subscribed to Physics Abstracts for many years until its cost soared to £110 and now takes Current Papers in Physics as an alternative.

(vi) The major reason for these cancellations is that of cost, with library budgets failing to keep up with sharply rising prices. In addition changes in courses and the sheer volume of information available seem to have caused a failure to use the Abstract Journals sufficiently to justify their cost to us.

Current Papers

(vii) I think its value is as a cheap alerting service to small libraries and firms.

(viii) The function of Topics and Current Papers overlap and Current Papers is much cheaper.

(ix) Current Papers should give a faster service, for current awareness, and a cheaper service which can be afforded by individual scientists and research workers.

(x) Current Papers is not timely and is expensive and we have reduced our purchases to the minimum reflecting lack of research staff interest.

(xi) We regularly subscribe to 27 copies of both Current Papers in 'Electrical' and in 'Physics' and think that the expensive production and printing of these papers is not warranted.

We are spending £550 alone per annum on these two, and in most cases the members of the staff throw them away after scanning.

The general opinion is that the original Current Papers in the cheaper newsprint form served the purpose at a much reduced cost.

SDI

(xii) SDI - Management find it too expensive.

(xiii) SDI is valuable but very expensive for those with a wide range of interests.

(xiv) SDI - x marked by our Physics Department. I take this to mean that cost is a deterent.

(xv) We tend to put our limited resources into cheap retrospective searches (cf MEDLARS) or group SDI with a cross disciplinary data base (cf ASCA Topics) rather than into the very expensive highly specialised SDI services.

(xvi) SDI services: these are too costly. Individual research workers in a university are not prepared to pay large sums of money from a research grant for an information service. Departments are reluctant to use their funds for such purposes and, at least, up till now, no library funds have been available for SDI services.

(xvii) It seems likely that payment for these new services (SDI and Topics) in this University would have to be made out of Faculty funds and not from the library grant.

TOPICS

(xviii) Management find it too expensive

(xix) The functions of Topics and Current Papers overlap and Current Papers is much cheaper.

(xx) Topics - if getting them on cards is worth the extra cost.

Currency of INSPEC services

(i) Current Papers - Borrowers ask to see it on circulation - presumably because they think it more 'timely' than Science Abstracts.

(ii) Science Abstracts complements the faster attributes of the other services.

(iii) Current Papers is not timely.

(iv) Some of our members think INSPEC publications are far too behind with their abstracts.

(v) The Current Papers series of publications are no longer providing a rapid alerting service since the delay between primary publication and appearance in Current Papers is of the order of 2-3 months in many cases. One hopes that increase in coverage will not delay the speed of alerting readers to recent information.

(vi) From the library's point of view, since items appear in Physics Abstracts and Current Papers in Physics about the same time, Physics Abstracts can be used for current awareness, and therefore, the usefulness of Current Papers is diminished.

(vii) The value of subscribing to both Science Abstracts and to the Current Papers series is questionable (as far as this organisations needs are concerned)- the Current Papers series is little used. Perhaps if the Current Papers entries were even more up-to-date they would be.

(viii) As Current Papers frequently arrives together with or after the comparable Science Abstracts part, I see no real value in it for a main University Library.

(ix) Improving recently - further improvement could be - best times seem to be for prepublication issues of AIP publications.

(x) We were considering dropping the libraries subscription to Current Papers when we found that their contents were the same as the corresponding issue (i.e. same date) of Science Abstracts. Now that they are diverging again we shall wait and see, but unless there is a significant speed difference we would prefer to use Science Abstracts for current awareness too. Current Papers needs to be faster than Science Abstracts to be worthwhile getting both.

Degree of detail of information supplied

(i) We consider that the title, as given in Current Papers, provides insufficient information on which the relevance of the paper can be judged.

Appendix 13

Scope of SDI

(i) SDI increases the scope of our own journal scanning.

(ii) SDI and Topics are particularly useful for recovery of items by secondary aspects.

(iii) We consider that our immediate current awareness needs in the fields covered by INSPEC are adequately satisfied by the SDI service and our own scanning of journals. We therefore see no significant advantage in subscribing to Current Papers.

Usefulness of notification cards

(i) Having references on individual cards speeds up distribution to various groups.

(ii) Topics - page copy needed for circulation.

(iii) We are making no use whatsoever of the INSPEC Topics service, as there appears to be no satisfactory way of organising the cards we receive.

Appendix 15

Attractive characteristics of INSPEC services

(i) As a busy general library, our staff are not subject specialists and we are seldom competent to help students in subject searching method. Our most common use of the Abstracts is as a source for the verification of inaccurate or unrecognisable references. I have the greatest respect for the standards maintained in your references.

(ii) Indexes of conferences, reports, bibliographies, etc. which you produce are all useful.

(iii) The frequent repetition of the subject classification scheme is invaluable. Meaningful relations are clear and the divisions help the user in formulating search topics.

(iv) In subjects other than Astrophysics classification is useful. As yet other services cannot provide a sufficiently useful astronomical service as far as I am aware.

Appendix 16

Subscribers' suggestions for improvements - General

(i) Computer and Control Abstracts is not of great interest to us at the moment as the part on computing is comparatively short - the periodical used to be called 'Control Abstracts' - and not as comprehensive as 'Computer Abstracts' or 'Computing Reviews'. It may be of some use in searching for papers on the fringe of Computer Science.

(ii) While Physics Abstracts have become more comprehensive in coverage their astronomical groupings are somewhat blunt and do not serve the same function as Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts. Physics Abstracts does not abstract Observatory Publications.

(iii) My main interest is in patent specifications which are poorly served.

(iv) For reports which are not available NTIS an alternative source should be given with the abstract of the report.

A note about availability of foreign theses would also be helpful. In some cases e.g. Physics Abstracts 1-55952 the thesis is not available on inter-library loan.

(v) Better liaison between the SDI system and National (or other) libraries in providing the material quoted on the cards. Frequently, our users request material which has been brought to their attention by the SDI service only to find that weeks, even months elapse before copies can be traced in this country - even the IEE doesn't hold quite a proportion of the literature requested.

(vi) Any service which is <u>personal</u> to the user (i.e. Research Scientist or Development Engineer) is particularly attractive. If it can be quick and relevant this makes it invaluable. In our sense 'quick' implies the actual provision of the document itself or a photocopy <u>not</u> the reference to it.

(vii) The service would be very useful on-line but very expensive. I believe information staff would prefer an off-line service provided it was limited to a few hours maximum (competing with the manual searching time).

Appendix 16 (continued)

(viii) A RECON like retrieval on INSPEC bases would be very welcome when systems and users and information staff are ready for them by - terminal availability, reasonable costs, inevitable mental/habit conditioning.

(ix) AIP - Their 'current bibliographies' (planned for 1973?) sound a good idea which I hope you will take up and expand.

Appendix 17

Subscribers' suggestions for improvements - Science Abstracts

(i) Scientific Report Serial Number Index.

(ii) From the Library's point of view, Science Abstracts would be more useful if a report number index was provided.

(iii) Abstracting of scientific reports separately from journal articles.

(iv) Most needed improvement is to the six-monthly indexes. It is often difficult to guess under which index heading a specific subject will appear. Even when the heading is chosen correctly it is usually necessary to scan all the entries under it because it is uncertain what will have been chosen as the filing word. Two possible improvements are:

either (1) Expand the present subject chapter codes index to cover all specific subjects likely to be sought, bind it in with the subject index yellow pages, and let each term in it refer to the index heading under which it will be found. This would provide specific access to the present alphabetico-classified subject index.

On second thoughts the same result could be achieved with less complication for the user by including all items in the subject-chapter codes index, and others as they arise, as cross references in the main index.

Add more subheadings to break-up long columns of index entries.

or (2) Undertake a more drastic reorganisation of the subject index, perhaps along the lines of the PRECIS system used by BNB.

Appendix 18

ubscribers' suggestions for improvements - Current Papers

(i) An author index in Current Papers would be useful.

(ii) Author Index to Current pers would help.

(iii) Comparing Current Papers in Physics and Physics Abstracts, possible improvements would be:

1. Current Papers in Physics to be relied on for current awareness: author and subject indexes to be printed (kwic index if nothing else)

2. Abstracts numbered as Current Papers in Physics entries to appear twice yearly with cumulated and edited indexes (more frequently if economic at current prices)

(iv) Subject index in Current Papers.

(v) Current Papers more frequently but not more than twice a month.

(vi) The Current Papers series is little used. Perhaps if in the Current Papers entries contents papers were included they would be.

Appendix 19

ubscribers' suggestions for improvements - SDI and Topics

(i) Attention is drawn to suggestions already made to you in connection with:

(a) Layout of Topics/SDI cards, particularly positioning of keywords.

(b) Inclusion in Science Abstracts numbering system of the corresponding Topics/SDI cards and in Science Abstracts, providing an index cross-referencing these two sets of numbers.

(ii) Not having corresponding reference from tape output to printed records is inconvenient - means extra time/work in investigating problems - not least in finding the documents for loan.

Appendix 20

Comparison of the value assigned to each service and the subscription cost - Total sample.

Service	Average no. of points	Cost £		Cost per Value point
Physics Abstracts	30.2	120		4.0
Electrical and Electronics Abstracts	35.6	100	£120	2.8
Computer and Control Abstracts	24.5	50		2.0
Current Papers in Physics	13.1	14		1.1
Current Papers in Electrical and Electronic Engineering	14.2	14		1.0
Current Papers on Computers and Control	8.4	12		1.4
SDI	17.9	65+		3.6
Topics	14.3	25		1.7

Appendix 21

Comparison of the value assigned to each service and the subscription cost - Subscribers to all series of Science Abstracts and Current Papers.

Number of subscribers = 20

	Average no. of points	Range of points	Cost £		Cost per value point
Physics Abstracts	24.4	8-40	120		4.9
Electrical and Electronics Abstracts	29.2	10-50	80	£120	2.7
Computer and Control Abstracts	18.0	5-32	40		2.2
Current Papers in Physics	7.7	0-25	14		1.8
Current Papers in Electrical and Electronic Engineering	7.7	0-15	14		1.8
Current Papers on Computers and Control	7.1	0-20	12		1.7

Attractive characteristics of other services used

(i) Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts

Of particular value to me are Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts. These are designed to be complete as regards astronomical literature. The subject is divided into convenient subgroups and allows rapid inspection. However, these abstracts do not cover other physical subjects for which Physics Abstracts is necessary. From Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts one could feel reasonably assured in extracting a complete list of publications on a given astrophysical topic or a given astronomical one for any year. This cannot be done from Physics Abstracts which does not abstract Observatory Publications.

(ii) Metals Abstracts

Metals Abstracts monthly subject index allows easier current awareness searching if looking for a narrow field.

Physics Abstracts is little used compared with Metals Abstracts. There is overlap of coverage to a certain extent in some fields of interest; in such areas Metals Abstracts would probably be preferred (e.g. subject index up-to-date with abstracts).

(iii) International Aerospace Abstracts

IAA provide a very useful keyword subject index in each issue which makes a search through current issues very easy.

(iv) Current Contents

Although Current Contents (Physical Sciences) is only a publication of journal contents lists it is bang up to date, and some of our members think INSPEC publications are far too behind with their abstracts.

(v) Current Contents: Physical and Chemical Sciences has a triannual cumulative journal index which in certain circumstances is useful for checking bibliographic details, i.e. assuming the journal is not in the Library, the author and page numbers of an article can be checked for the contents page via the journal index.

Appendix 22 (continued)

(vi) Current Contents: really fast current awareness.

(vii) Current Contents series, for displaying the contents pages of periodicals.

DESY

(viii) We co-operate in the SDI system operated by the Deutsche Electronen Synchrotron (DESY) at Hamburg which is particularly well suited to our purposes being tailored to High Energy Physics and including report literature.

(ix) The groups taking ASCA have great confidence in it and like the reprint facility because they can obtain material the library doesn't receive very quickly.

Appendix 23

Promotion of SDI and Topics

Personally I would like to see a wider use of INSPEC services here, and the introduction of Topics and SDI. However, much propaganda is required to promote such services, and as always the big problem is lack of money. Moreover, it seems likely that payment for these new services in this University would have to be made out of faculty funds and not from the library grant. I hope that the financial situation may improve in the next quinquennium and that we may appoint a full time Information Officer to promote the use of such mechanised information services. We look forward to the OSTI report on experimental Information Officers in University Libraries.

Appendix 24

Additional interviews

Unless hopelessly costly or impractical, personal interviews should be sought for INSPEC's services either by qualified INSPEC staff or by qualified company staff.